

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for transmission over packet networks, the method comprising:
 - detecting, at a first node, at least one next node;
 - creating a channel between the first node and the at least one next node;
 - receiving, at the first node, a first packet;
 - detecting a protocol of the first packet;
 - merging the first packet with a second packet of the same protocol as the first packet into a packet having a protocol different from both the protocol of the first packet and the protocol of the second packet; and
 - transmitting the merged first packet and second packet to the at least one next node via the channel.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the first packet contains circuit-based information.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the second packet contains circuit-based information.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - determining whether available bandwidth exceeds a predetermined threshold.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the predetermined threshold is set to provide a minimum level of quality of service for voice communications.
6. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - rejecting a communication related to the first packet.
7. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the predetermined threshold is set to provide a minimum level of quality of service for data communications.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the first node is an existing media gateway.
9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the first node is connected to a circuit-switched voice network.
10. (Currently Amended) An internet trunking protocol node comprising:
 - a channel interface for assigning a channel to a next node;
 - a port for transmitting and receiving a plurality of packets to and from the next node;
 - a processor for performing instructions in response to received packets; and
 - a memory, in communication with the processor, for storing a plurality of instructions, wherein the instructions comprise:
 - instructions, responsive to the receipt of a packet, for detecting a protocol of the packet;
 - instructions for merging a plurality of packets of the same protocol into a merged packet having a protocol different from the protocol of the plurality of packets;
 - instructions for splitting a packet comprised of a plurality of packets of the same protocol;
 - instructions for routing packets according to an internet protocol.
11. (Original) The internet trunking protocol node of claim 10 wherein the port is connected to a packet communications voice network.
12. (Previously Presented) The internet trunking protocol node of claim 10 wherein the port is connected to a media gateway through the packet communications voice network.
13. (Original) The internet trunking protocol node of claim 10 wherein the port is connected to a common packet communications voice network.
14. (Original) The internet trunking protocol node of claim 10 wherein at least one of the plurality of packets contains circuit-based information.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for establishing voice communication over packet networks, the method comprising:

receiving an internet protocol packet at a node in communication with a plurality of nodes;

splitting the internet protocol packet into a plurality of internet trunking protocol (ITP) packets, wherein each ITP packet of the plurality of ITP packets contains circuit-based information;

for each of the plurality of ITP packets,

determining a next node to which the ITP packet is to be transmitted;

determining whether available bandwidth to the next node exceeds a predetermined threshold;

assigning a channel to the ITP packet; and

if there is a second ITP packet that is to be transmitted to the next node, merging the second ITP packet with the ITP packet into a packet with a protocol different from both the protocol of the ITP packet and the protocol of the second ITP packet.